

NEW BOOKS.

Brief Reviews of Important and Interesting New Publications.

There is a story of a wood carver who sought for years to attain an ideal. He procured for himself a great variety of exotic and costly woods, all of which were of no help to him, and he rewarded him only with the memory of their great expense. Finally one evening as he sat gazing dreamily and despondently into the fire, an inspiration seized him; he caught up a half-burned stick from the fading embers, set to work upon it with a chisel that he was hardly conscious of directing, and produced a masterpiece. The moral of this is, of course, that the artist does well to avail himself of the material which lies close at hand; and it is true that a great many sincere friends of Mr. H. U. Chaffield-Taylor desire most earnestly that he would write a novel about the Princess Estelle and the Duke of Veragua, who enjoyed through him the freedom of the city of Chicago when they came to this country from Spain to do honor to the great Columbus celebration of several years ago. Contrary to what everybody has persistently hoped and expected, none of the several novels which Mr. Chaffield-Taylor has published has been concerned with the Princess and the Duke. Of course, literally this may be said to be exotic material, but everybody feels that it is the possession of the potentiality of inspiration, and that it would grow into an exceedingly interesting novel under Mr. Chaffield-Taylor's ship-shod pen. He has said to be strange and deteriorating material to him. However, in the absence of that which we desire, we should doubtless be thankful for what we can get, and "The Vice of Fools," by this experienced and gifted author (Herbert S. Stone & Co.) will keep alive a fame which promises to be secure, even through the Duke and the Princess should be ignored forever. Mr. Chaffield-Taylor, according to report, invented a year or two ago the plan, said to be very valuable in Chicago, of changing one's clothes in a cab, so that one may go with the least possible delay from business to any sort of formal evening entertainment. Whether this report is true or not, it seems to contain a very valuable suggestion, and there is no reason why anybody should be ashamed to have invented a plan of the sort. At the same time it is not to be denied that there is no particular need to elaborate such a plan in a novel, unless one is very scrupulous, realist indeed, and we hasten to say that in "The Vice of Fools" nobody changes his clothes in a cab, and that it is not at all essential to the plot or necessary to the general interest of the story that anybody should. A certain disappointment attaches to the fact that "The Vice of Fools" is a story of Washington, instead of a story of Chicago. In an earlier novel Mr. Chaffield-Taylor drew the nearer wish and chilled the larger enthusiasm of his friends by elighting Chicago and devoting his attention to the British aristocracy. As we remember that story the heroine, who was the daughter of a Chicago shoe dealer, and who always had a plenty of very nice shoes in consequence, spent most of her time in England, riding race horses, plunging at cards and attending eccentric dances dating back to the time of the Conquest, returning to Chicago for a supper of griddle cakes only at the very end of the book. The characters in the new story include a wealthy young Lieutenant of cavalry, who distinguishes himself in a boxing match by engaging successfully in a boxing match with a bulky and arrogant butler; an unworthy diplomatist, a half-worth General, a beautiful girl torn between love, avarice and revenge, and a widow who says such rude things that she would surely be bastinadoed if she said them in Chi. It leaves an agreeable impression, however, that should discover the perit of the diplomatist, the General, a sort of juggler out of political influence and wealth, should die providentially after a due period of remorse; that the beautiful and distracted girl should reward the Lieutenant who flattered her, and that the rude widow should succeed in her fascinations of an elderly foreigner. As a whole, "The Vice of Fools" is a story which deals out justice and provides a dialogue that is brilliant, even if it is somewhat formidable. The reader will perceive that it is the desire of the author to present in the novel a group of people who are clever and worth while. Undoubtedly he has been successful, and we are free to say in regard to the characters in "The Vice of Fools" that we have frequently been betrayed into much worse company.

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